

Kven language

The **Kven language** or **Kven Finnish** (*kvääni* or *kväänin kieli*; *kainu* or *kainun kieli*^[3]) is a Finnic language spoken in northern Norway by the Kven people. For political and historical reasons, it received the status of a minority language in 2005 within the framework of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Linguistically, however, it is seen as a somewhat mutually intelligible dialect of the Finnish language, and grouped together with the Peräpohjola dialects such as Meänkieli, spoken in Torne Valley in Sweden. It is generally considered a language in Norway and mostly considered a dialect in Finland.

Contrary to popular belief, the dialects spoken by the Kvens and Kainuu peoples are not closely related. The Kainuu dialect is one of the Savonian dialects that was formed from the 16th century onwards, when immigrants from Savonia started to settle in the northern wastelands.

The Kven language has come to incorporate many Norwegian loanwords, such as *tyskäläinen* (from the Norwegian word *tysk*, meaning *German*) instead of standard Finnish *saksalainen*. The Kven language also uses some old Finnish words that are no longer used in Finland.

There are about 1,500 to 10,000 known native speakers of this language, most of whom are over the age of 60. This population uses it as their main way of communicating and speaks no other language. This is a growing concern because as this population ages and soon die, there is fear that the Kven language will die out as well. Middle aged speakers tend to have a passing knowledge of the language. They use it occasionally, but not frequently enough to keep it off the endangered list. People under the age of 30 are barely seen to speak or know the language. However, children in the community of Børselv can learn Kven in their primary schools.^[4]

Kven	
kvääni, kainu	
Native to	Norway
Native speakers	2,000–8,000 (2005?) ^[1]
Language family	Uralic <ul style="list-style-type: none">Finnic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Finnish (debated)<ul style="list-style-type: none">Kven
Official status	
Recognised minority language in	Norway
Regulated by	Kven language board
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	fkv
Glottolog	kven1236 (http://glottolog.org/resource/1anguoid/id/kven1236) ^[2]

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History

The Kven Assembly was formed in 2007 and plans to standardize a Kven written language. The term *Kven* first appeared in Ohthere's tales from the 800s, along with the terms "Finn" and "Norwegian". The area that the Kvens lived in was called Kvenland. They originally settled in Kvenland, which also expanded into the flat areas of the Bay of Bothnia. As the Kven community continued to grow and develop a long standing culture, the Norwegian state deemed the Kvens taxpayers and the term "Kven" soon became an ethnic term.^[5] In 1992, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages was enacted to protect regional and minority languages. It included Kven as a minority language; it is only protected under Part II. This means that the culture and language are barely protected under this charter and with the language dying out it is important that the language be moved to Part III.^[6]

Organizations

The Norwegian Kven Organization was established in 1987. The organization currently has about 700 members and about eight local branches. The members report to the government about the history and rights of the Kven people. The members also try and highlight Kven news by advancing Kvens media coverage. The organization has also been pushing the Norwegian government to establish a state secretary for Kven issues. Moving the language of Kven into kindergarten classrooms, as well as all other education levels is also a forefront issue that the organization is aiming to tackle.^[7] All advances made by the Norwegian Kven Organization is to promote the growth and conservation of the Kven language and culture.

Official status

From the 1860s onwards the Norwegian government attempted to assimilate the Kvens. For example, the use of the Kven language became forbidden in schools and government offices, and Kven town names were replaced by Norwegian names. From the 1970s onwards, the Kvens and the Sami in Norway have openly been allowed to use their original native languages, the Kven language and the Sami languages, respectively, and to teach them to their children in schools. Despite its recent gain of status as a minority language, there is still a major discussion among the Kven about whether the Finnish orthography should be applied to the language or if a new orthography should be devised.

Since 2006, it has been possible to study the Kven culture and language at the University of Tromsø,^[8] and in 2007 the Kven language board was formed at the Kven institute, a national centre for Kven language and culture in Børselv, Norway. The council developed a written standard Kven language, using Finnish orthography to maintain inter-Finnish language understanding.^[9] The grammar, written in Kven, was published in 2014.^[10] A Norwegian translation published in 2017 is freely available.^[11]

Geographic distribution

Today, most speakers of Kven are found in two Norwegian communities, Storfjord and Porsanger. A few speakers can be found other places, such as Bugøynes, Neiden, Vestre Jakobselv, Vadsø, and Nordreisa.

In northeastern Norway, mainly around Varanger Fjord, the spoken language is quite similar to standard Finnish, whereas the Kven spoken west of Alta, due to the area's close ties to the Torne Valley area along the border between Finland and Sweden, is more closely related to the Meänkieli Finnish spoken there.

In government report from 2005, the number of people speaking Kven in Norway is estimated to be between 2,000 and 8,000, depending on the criteria used. However, there are very few young people who speak it, making it an endangered language.^[1]

Phonology

The phonology of Kven is similar to that of Finnish. However, Kven and Finnish diverge in the phonemic realization of some words. While Standard Finnish has been replacing /ð/ with /d/, it is retained in Kven. For instance, the word *syöä* ('to eat') in Kven is *syödä* in Finnish. In addition, due to loanwords, the sound /ʃ/ is much more common in Kven than in Finnish; for example, *prošekti* "project" (Finnish: *projekti*).^[12]

Vowels

Kven has 16 vowels, if one includes vowel length:

	<u>Front</u>		<u>Back</u>	
	<u>Unrounded</u>	<u>Rounded</u>	<u>Unrounded</u>	<u>Rounded</u>
<u>Close</u>	i i:	y y:		u u:
<u>Mid</u>	e e:	ø ø:		o o:
<u>Open</u>	æ æ:		ɑ ɑ:	

In writing, the vowel length is indicated by doubling the letter; e.g., ⟨yy⟩ /y:/ and ⟨öö⟩ /ø:/.

The graphemes representing /ø/, /æ/ and /ɑ/ are ⟨ö⟩, ⟨ä⟩ and ⟨a⟩, respectively.

Consonants

Kven has 14 consonants found in native vocabulary, and four consonants found in loanwords:

		<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Labiodental</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Postalveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Nasal</u>		m			n			ŋ	
<u>Plosive</u>	<u>voiceless</u>	p			t			k	
	<u>voiced</u>	(b)			(d)			(g)	
<u>Fricative</u>	<u>voiceless</u>		f		s	(ʃ)			h
	<u>voiced</u>			ð					
<u>Trill</u>					r				
<u>Approximant</u>			ʊ		l		j		

/b, d, g, ʃ/ are only found in loanwords.

/v/ and /ʃ/ are represented in writing by ⟨v⟩ and ⟨š⟩, respectively.

/ð/ is represented in writing by ⟨đ⟩.

/ŋ/ is represented in writing by ⟨n⟩ if followed by /k/, and ⟨ng⟩ if geminated; i.e., ⟨nk⟩ /ŋk/ and ⟨ng⟩ /ŋː/.

Gemination is indicated in writing by doubling the letter; e.g., ⟨mm⟩ for /mː/ and ⟨ll⟩ for /lː/.

Grammar

Just like in Finnish, Kven has many noun cases. In Kven, the third person plural verb ending uses the passive form.

The word food in kven cases^[13]

case	Singular	plural
nom	ruoka	ruovat
gen	ruovan	ruokkiin
par	ruokkaa	ruokkii
ine	ruovassa	ruokissa
ill	ruokhaan	ruokhiin
ela	ruovasta	ruokista
ade	ruovala	ruokila
abe	ruovatta	ruokitta
all	ruovale	ruokile
abl	ruovalta	ruokilta
ess	ruokana	ruokina
tra	ruovaksi	ruokiksi
com	ruokine	ruokine

The letter H is also very common in kven but there are rules on where it goes.

1. Passives - praatathan
2. illative cases - suomheen
3. third infinites - praatamhaan
4. words that end with s in possessive forms - kirvheen
5. words that end with e in the genitive form - satheen
6. plural past perfect and perfect - net oon ostanheet.
7. third plural ending - het syöđhään^[14]

Example

Kven	Finnish	English
<p>Tromssan fylkinkomuuni oon saanu valmhiiksi mailman ensimmäisen kainun kielen ja kulttuurin plaanan.</p> <p>Se oon seppä tekemhään plaanoi. Heilä oon esimerkiksi biblioteekkiplaana, transporttiplaana ja fyysisen aktiviteetin plaana.^[15]</p>	<p>Tromssan läänikunta on saanut valmiiksi maailman ensimmäisen kveenin kielen ja kulttuurin suunnitelman.</p> <p>Se on taitava tekemään suunnitelmia. Heillä on esimerkiksi kirjastosuunnitelma, liikennesuunnitelma ja fyysisten toimintojen suunnitelma.</p>	<p>Tromsá's county municipality has gotten ready the first kven language and culture plan.</p> <p>They are skilled at making plans. For example they have a library plan, transport plan and physical activity plan.</p>

■

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External links

- Kven country names (ISO 3166) (<http://www.erikbolstad.no/geo/verda/land/>) – Page with translations of all country names to Kven, Finnish, Norwegian and English.
- : Söderholm, Eira (2007). "Kainun kielen grammatikki".

This grammar can be found in the Kven language [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20070710020301/http://uit.no/getfile.php?PagId=7815&FileId=18) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070710020301/http://uit.no/getfile.php?PagId=7815&FileId=18>).

The grammar above can be found in the Norwegian language [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20070710020602/http://uit.no/getfile.php?PagId=7815&FileId=19) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070710020602/http://uit.no/getfile.php?PagId=7815&FileId=19>).

- Kven language resources at Giellatekno (<http://giellatekno.uit.no/cgi/index.fkv.eng.html>)
- Wikipedia (<https://incubator.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wp/fkv/Etulaita>)
- Ruijan kaiku (<https://www.ruijan-kaiku.no>)
- Dictionary (<https://sanat.oahpa.no/>)
- Valtv2 pohjan kielilä (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJwReyhPostLf7gP1V8kWDw>)
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